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NOFORN

DEPARTMENT FOR PM, SCA/RA AND SCA/INSB

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SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: ARMY'S FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY FOR EXPANSION

Classified By: A/DCM Michael R. DeTar, for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: In an ambitious five-year plan for expansion, the Sri Lankan military plans to roughly double its size to deal with the need for security in the post-conflict situation. The Army Commander has already announced plans to recruit about 100,000 new soldiers at an accelerated pace over the next few months. In addition, the government has announced the creation of two new military commands at Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu, the main towns in the formerly LTTE-controlled areas. The cost of the project may be nearly \$3 billion. Post assesses that the plan as it now exists is unaffordable for the Sri Lankan government under any scenario. However, its existence gives early clues to the intentions of the military leadership for handling the post-conflict scenario in the areas until recently under LTTE control. End summary.

MILITARY ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR NEW RECRUITMENT  
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¶2. (SBU) The Sri Lankan military plans to enlist at least 100,000 additional soldiers to head off a possible resurgence by the LTTE. According to media reports, the Sri Lankan military is now seeking a number of suicide bombers believed to be hiding in Colombo and other Sinhalese-majority towns. General Sarath Fonseka has stated that there are also smaller rebel teams in jungles. According to Fonseka, the proposed troop buildup addresses concerns that remnants of the LTTE currently living abroad may resurrect under new leadership. "There may be people abroad trying to promote a new leader and stage a comeback," Fonseka told state-run Independent Television Network. "Our strength is 200,000 and it will become 300,000 soon. It will not be easy for them to build up a terror group as they did before." In order to keep the LTTE from rebuilding, General Fonseka is calling on more men to enlist in the Sri Lankan military. "We like to see young men joining us more quickly," he said. "We don't mind enlisting even 10,000 a month; we need a lot more soldiers to reach our goal."

¶3. (SBU) In the same interview, as reported by government-owned Sinhala newspapers, General Fonseka announced plans to establish new commands in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu (the main towns of the Vanni, occupied by the Tamil Tigers for many years). The Media Center for National Security confirmed to Pol section that Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi Army camps will be upgraded to "Security Forces Headquarters" (SFHQ), commanded by Major Generals, along the lines of the existing SFHQs in Vavuniya and Jaffna.

FIVE YEAR PLAN WOULD DOUBLE SIZE OF FORCES  
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¶4. (S/NF) Consistent with the public announcements of an expansion, Embassy has received a copy of a report and supporting documentation indicating that the Sri Lankan military plans to expand greatly over the next five years. Post is not in a position to establish the authenticity of the documents with certainty. Nevertheless, the source has demonstrated consistent contacts with senior military and intelligence officials who could have given him this information.

¶5. (S/NF) The documents contain a rationale for the expansion, which includes: "Sri Lanka, even though being an Island with insignificant landmass, her strategic location in the world map with a large Tamil speaking community living across the Palk strait is a factor in the overall geopolitical frame work in the South Asian region... Maintaining a large Ground Force to act as a deterrent against any Internal and External Threats and Aggressions Targeting the Sovereignty of the Nation and the populace is a viable option to overcome such negative influences. The entire plan for the future expansion/deployment has been worked out in keeping with the above indicated requisites in mind... maintaining a Military presence with strength and depth to hold the strategically important Townships and Communication Centers is critical in an overall perspective to subdue any acts of Terrorism or Sabotage reoccurring whilst continuing with Pacification Operations to win over the public. Conduct of Aggressive Intelligence Operations and pursuing Psychological Operations to rehabilitate the mind set of the public to tilt their affinity will also be facilitated by such a deployment. In this context the Sri Lanka Army persists with the view that the control of the major Townships, Population Centers and the Population should be vested with them."

¶6. (S/NF) The package includes organizational charts of the desired end state of the armed forces, spreadsheets containing the proposed strengths of the various units, recruitment goals, maps of the deployments (to the northern and eastern areas, where Tamils are in the majority), and detailed cost estimates. A committee composed of the three service chiefs reportedly drafted the plan. It entails increasing the size of the armed forces by a total of 210,000 soldiers over the next five years to a final strength of 410,000 ) 63% regular forces and 37% "volunteers." The projected cost is 331.9 billion rupees, or about USD 2.8 billion at current exchange rates. The fiscal impact is greatest in the out-years, as the Army reaches its final intended size, but also because of an equally ambitious procurement program.

COMMENT  
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¶7. (S) An interesting omission in the plan is any substantive discussion of a role for Sri Lanka's police in providing security in the north. This may reflect a lack of confidence that the police have the capacity to assume greater responsibility for internal security, particularly in the the former conflict zone. It may also reflect the service chiefs' desire to continue receiving priority for GSL resources in the post-conflict context and to avoid being subjected to rapid demobilization.

¶8. (S) COMMENT continued: Embassy has no indication as yet that the GSL plans to fund the plan, in part or in full. In our view, the plan is simply unaffordable under any scenario. Such an enormous increase in defense costs would presumably require a Cabinet decision. Further, the project for military expansion brings into question the seriousness of the government's commitment to the IMF to reduce the overall fiscal deficit to 7% of GDP. The plan nevertheless offers a valuable perspective into the mindset of the officers who produced it and their intentions for pacifying the post-conflict north. The military already has an important voice in shaping government policy. That voice, even if this plan cannot be carried out, appears to want to remain the

decisive one in determining the GSL's development and reconstruction strategy for the North. In Post's view, this underlines the need for international organizations and bilateral donor governments to remain vigilant in reminding and encouraging the government to follow through on its commitment to treat Tamils fairly, especially the ones currently interned in IDP camps, to reach out to Tamils and other minorities living in the Sinhalese-majority south and west, as well as to the Tamil Diaspora, and to put forward a proposal for a political solution that safeguards minority rights and addresses the legitimate aspirations of those Sri Lankan citizens who do not belong to the dominant community.

MOORE